

Letter to the Editor

## **Governor Rell's proposed expansion of Commission on Culture & Tourism grant programs supports Connecticut's economic development**

**Increased funding would be earmarked for state's arts, culture and historic treasures**

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Demonstrating her continued commitment to the state's arts, history, culture and tourism assets as essential economic drivers, this week Governor M. Jodi Rell proposed significant funding increases for the arts, culture and tourism grant programs administered by the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism.

With the Connecticut Legislature's endorsement of the Governor's proposal, hundreds of cultural, arts and historic organizations and attractions across Connecticut would be able to expand their programs and make necessary capital improvements to enrich visitor experiences and preserve historic buildings.

Additional grant funding to these diverse organizations will help the state and the Commission continue to position Connecticut's cultural and tourism assets to attract and engage audiences — both in-state residents and out-of-state visitors. Increased visitation to these organizations would ultimately help to strengthen our economy.

The first pillar in the Governor's proposal provides \$3.6 million in additional grant dollars for the Commission's existing grant programs, bringing the total grant budget to \$10 million.

This Cultural Treasures funding would offer unprecedented new resources that would allow organizations — that are often strapped for funding but play an important role in preserving our state's unique culture and history — to increase their ability to serve, educate and inspire Connecticut residents and visitors, young and old.

Connecticut must also continue its commitment to invest in our culture and history for future generations. To meet this goal, the second pillar in the Governor's proposal addresses the myriad of arts, cultural and historic organizations statewide that are challenged with serving their communities and visitors within deteriorating environments, including historic buildings, theaters, museums, galleries, cultural centers and historic sites.

Leveraging bond revenues, the Governor proposes to make available \$20 million in capital improvement grants for these organizations to renovate or expand their facilities. This program would offer grant financing not to exceed 20 percent of the cost of the capital improvement project.

As a complement to the Cultural Treasures' programmatic and operating support grants, the \$20 million in Cultural Treasures capital improvement grant dollars will help preserve, expand and enhance the places and spaces within which these programs are offered.

Since 2003, the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism has awarded grants to 930 organizations and schools, 199 individuals and 61 municipalities. Governor Rell's proposal offers our state an exciting opportunity to expand these important organizations' efforts. In doing so, we preserve the cultural assets that contribute to our citizens' quality of life, while boosting one of the state's most critical economic engines.

We urge the legislature and Connecticut residents to support the Governor's proposed expansion of the Cultural Treasures grant program. By working together to preserve and enhance our greatest cultural assets, we can continue to showcase to the world why Connecticut is such a unique and notable destination.